

Audubon california Kern River Preserve

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Project Summary

Audubon California's South Fork Kern River Visitor Center

Audubon California's Kern River Preserve is a 3,400-acre wildlife sanctuary along the South Fork Kern River in Weldon, California. The Preserve is contiguous with private lands under conservation easements and public lands managed by the California Department of Fish and Game, US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

There is strong interest among community members and Audubon to develop a facility to host the growing number of visitors coming to the Kern River Valley to enjoy the region's natural amenities. Audubon proposes to build a 5-6,000 sq. ft. green modular structure on the Kern River Preserve with a large common area, parking area and trails to serve the needs of the community and visitors. This building will incorporate the best solar power, energy and water conservation, environmentally sustainable materials and design features that are commonly available "off-the-shelf" and suitable for regular home and business applications. This building will serve a model for home and business construction in this region.

Audubon is seeking a \$152,000 grant to hire architectural, planning and engineering firm(s) by competitive bid to plan and design the facility. During Phase I, the contractor(s) will be expected to develop blueprints for the buildings. Our intention will be developed collaboratively and will be available to other communities with a similar need in the Sierra Nevada.

Aside from hosting visitors, the new center will include office space, natural history museum, gift shop, community teleconferencing conference center, and research space for visiting university researchers. The center will also include a patio for community gatherings, interpretative signage, nature trails accessible from the center, and native landscaping. Audubon estimates that the complete project including construction and an endowment will be approximately \$5 million and anticipates launching a campaign to complete the project by 2010.

The Kern River Preserve's current infrastructure is limiting our programming and is limiting our ability to meet community and visitor needs. Our current outreach and office facilities are in building over 70 years old that were moved to this site in the 1950's. The meandering South Fork Kern River is moving toward these buildings increasing the risk of flooding.

With substantial portions of the Southern Sierra Nevada under growing pressure from sprawling development, the need for community conservation education is paramount. The Kern River Preserve and Kern River Valley communities are fast becoming a destination for nature tourists. With our new center we will work to educate the public and accommodate more visitors. We believe that this plan and ultimately, our state of the art facility will serve as a model for residents and other communities for the entire Sierra Nevada.

Planning Grant Proposed Budget: Audubon will contract for the following services:

Phase I – Plan Development and Feasibility

Architectural and Engineered Plan for Building	\$135,000
Contingency Fund (20%)	\$27,000
Sub Total Phase I	\$162,000
Less cost share Total request Phase I	<u>-\$10,000</u> \$152.000